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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000796

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DEPT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: EUR DAS JONES' MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TOPI

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN WITHERS FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On October 30, President Bamir Topi told DAS Jones that Albania is moving forward with governmental reforms, although at times the debate is "harsh." He specifically cited Ambassador Withers, public statements as playing a helpful role in promoting independent institutions, thanked the U.S. for its assistance and called U.S. ratification of Albania's NATO invitation a "joyous" moment for Albania. He said Albania is playing a moderating role in the region and maintained that Serbia, which still perceives itself as the dominant power among the former Yugoslav states, should look more to the West for its future. He said Kosovo still needs lots of assistance but emphasized that the region is largely committed to a "Euro-Atlantic vision." Albania also fully supports NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine, according to Topi. End summary.

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Grateful for US support for NATO membership  
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¶2. (C) On October 30, President Bamir Topi expressed his gratitude to the U.S. for its assistance to Albania. Topi said it was a "joyous" moment when the Senate ratified the treaty concerning Albania's entry into NATO and added the U.S. is responsible for Albania's entry. Albania, he said, is trying very hard to make reforms in order "to fully deserve" entry into NATO. He noted advances in judicial and electoral institutions, saying that the 2009 elections are the most important issue now, and that everything else will flow from them. Topi declared his commitment to judicial reform, noting that the debate between the government, the judiciary, and the prosecutor can be "harsh." He specifically welcomed Ambassador Withers, public statements in support of independent institutions. He said that, in Albanian, nascent democracy, these international inputs played a useful role. DAS Jones urged Topi to do all he could to help continue to build independent democratic institutions and support them politically and economically.

¶3. (C) Topi described the moderating role Albania has played and will continue to play in the region and expressed appreciation for the close cooperation between the U.S and Albania in the Western Balkans. Given the large emigre population in Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece, the GOA works hard to preserve contacts with the Albanian parties in these countries, and uses its influence with these groups to press for stability.

¶4. (C) DAS Jones thanked Topi for all the support he and his country have given to help stabilize the region as well as for troop contributions in both Iraq and Afghanistan. DAS Jones noted that Kosovo would not be where it is today without Albanian support, and he urged Topi to work closely with his Kosovar counterpart to develop the latter's economy.

¶5. (C) Topi thanked once again the US, stating that the peaceful road to Kosovo's independence would not have been

possible without the U.S. He agreed that Kosovo must be assisted. To that end, he stressed regional partnerships and said that he has seen progress in the region in terms of cooperation. He characterized regional meetings of Balkan Presidents as positive and noted that on November 3, the President of Kosovo will visit Albania. Topi said he plans to visit Montenegro and Croatia in the coming months and the Slovenian President will visit early next year. All the dialogues, he said, focus on how to move toward the West. In a regional meeting in Dubrovnik, for example, the Balkan leaders discussed regional issues in a positive atmosphere, focusing on economic issues, including the improvement of infrastructure. DAS Jones urged Topi to push the Kosovars to focus on their economy and create a positive investment environment.

¶6. (C) According to Topi, Serbia still perceives itself as the dominant power in the region; but it needs to move away from its old thinking and embrace the Euro-Atlantic vision. He has met Serbian President Boris Tadic several times, both bilaterally and multilaterally, and, aware of the great internal debate within Serbia, Albania has expressed its support for Tadic. The two sides have discussed Kosovo, and while Tadic is trying to distance himself from the conservatives in his country, he still maintains a tough position on Kosovo. Topi painted the issue as a matter of political will. He said it is better for not only Serbia, but the entire Balkan Peninsula to have a Western focus and be united. Such a movement would bring peace, he said, and remove much of the tension that remains. Finally, Topi raised briefly the Russian aggression against Georgia. He believes that the future of Georgian and Ukraine lies in NATO and that

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GOA is in full accordance with the U.S. on this.

¶7. (U) DAS Jones cleared this cable.  
WITHERS